

SOCIALIST STUDIES

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PRODUCTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE LABOUR

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Communications to: General Secretary,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

**SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU!
AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!**

The Problem

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who accept and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

The Solution

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the class struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the first step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same class interests, Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who agree with the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

What Next?

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We have no leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political commitment and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. Joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political decision you will make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want a world without unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality you should seriously consider joining us. **ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO:**
The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London
N12 8SB.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

In an article in the **Sunday Times** (10 January 1999), the journalist, Paul Oppenheim, claimed that the 1990's saw the triumph of Capitalism over Socialism. He wrote of "*the near-death of Socialism*", the "*relative success of liberal economics*" and the "*Bourgeoisification of the working class*".

As far as Socialists are concerned Socialism has never existed in any country in the world, past or present. Russia, from 1917 to 1989, was mainly a state capitalist country which traded on the world market. China and Cuba are both capitalist countries, which produce commodities through the exploitation of wage labour. The programmes of nationalisation, high taxation and Keynesian intervention into the economy by the Labour Party was also capitalist in its intent and purpose. There has never been common ownership and democratic control of the means and production by all of society. So where is this "*near-death of Socialism*"? A figment of Mr Oppenheim's imagination perhaps?

And where is the "*relative success*" of liberal economics? It was Marx, in his refutation of Say's law (which purported to show the harmony of buying and selling) who demonstrated capitalism to be anarchic, prone to crises with periods of high unemployment. Is the relative success of liberal economics the millions of unemployed workers throughout the world? What a success! As the **Times** economist, Mr Kaletsky, recently wrote: "*the fundamentalist liberal economics of the past twenty years is dead*" as a result of its inability to explain economic events like continued mass unemployment. Former adherents of liberal economics, like Professor John Gray, of the London School of Economics, are now bewailing the ugly, brutal and competitive environment in which we live, an environment which "*abandons (people) to a life of fragments and a proliferation of empty choices*" (**False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism**, p 38).

Finally, Mr Oppenheim states that the working class has been "*embourgeoisé*". Frederick Engels was lamenting about the "*embourgeoisement*" of the British working class in the late 19th century. So, later, did Lenin with his jibe about the "*aristocracy of labour*". If the workers have become capitalists let them stop going to work and see how long they can survive without a wage or a salary.

The case for Socialism does not depend on how high or low wages are. Nor on the amount of possessions workers have. Nor the holidays they take. Nor on what they choose to do with their savings. The case of Socialism exists because capitalism cannot be run in the interests of all society. Profits continually conflict with human need. Employment is stressful, alienating, unpredictable and often unpleasant.

In fact, just as the working class was being written off by Lenin as not being cut out for Socialism (**What is to be Done?**), the Socialist Party of Great Britain was established in 1904 by working class men and women having no political leaders telling them what to think and what to do. For the SPGB, Socialism was to be established through a principled Socialist party by a Socialist majority gaining control of the machinery of government.

The Socialism of the SPGB was opposed to the bogus claims of the Labour Party and the Bolsheviks. Socialism will mean the abolition of the labour market, the buying and selling of labour power, employers and employees. In short, the abolition of the wages system. Neither the Labour Party nor the Bolsheviks existed to create such a social system.

Mr Oppenheim's obituary is therefore wrong. It is a funeral without a corpse. Socialism remains a practical and necessary alternative to capitalism in line with the interests of the working class. It is true and regrettable that workers currently do not give their support to Socialism but vote instead for capitalist political parties. However, there is no reason to suppose that they will continue to do so in the future. As Marx noted, capitalism forever creates its own gravediggers by the social problems it creates and the unpleasantness of the life it generates. The death of capitalism. Now, there is an obituary to write.

NEITHER STATE NOR PRIVATE CAPITALISM

Throughout the 20th century the Socialist Party of Great Britain has wasted much time and energy in refuting the erroneous claims made by the Labour Party and the supporters of Lenin that nationalisation or state capitalism has anything to do with Socialism. This time could have been better spent explaining to workers the positive benefits of a classless society of free men and women.

State bureaucrats trying to plan commodity production and exchange for profit within the context of world capitalism, the wages system and the conflict between employers and workers is not the same as the whole society democratically planning production to directly meet social needs.

Nationalisation or public ownership is therefore not the same as the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution. Nor is state capitalism a stepping-stone to Socialism. Unlike nationalisation, common ownership implies the absence of ownership. Common ownership of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth is a social relation specific to a classless society in which labour is voluntary and where production for use is directed democratically by all of society.

As Socialists, we are not interested in the debate between advocates of nationalisation or privatisation. Nor are we interested in whether the state is more or less efficient than the private sector. The state's intervention in the capitalist economy has nothing to do with Socialism. Propositions like "*State Socialism*" and "*Market Socialism*" are absurd and meaningless.

As a consequence, the criticisms by some supporters of capitalism, economists like Ludwig von Mises, F A Hayek, Milton Friedman and Murray Rothbard against state capitalism are not criticisms against Socialism and Socialist ideas despite what these academics might think. The privatisation of many

industries like British Gas, was not "*a receding of Socialism*" as Margaret Thatcher once claimed. And the Labour Party's Clause IV was never a Socialist objective. Labour has never sought, nor does it seek, a mandate from the working class for the establishment of Socialism and, instead, exists solely to administer the needs of British capitalism.

So-called advocates of the "*free-market*" also hold that any intervention by the state in the economy is "*Socialist*". This is nonsense. When the Tory government of 1844 threatened the railway owners with nationalisation was this a "*Socialist*" policy? Of course not. The Tories, until quite recently, favoured nationalisation as a policy against monopoly.

Socialists conclude that the working class, those who have to exist on a wage or a salary, have no interest in the nationalisation or privatisation debate. Nor do the trade unions. Neither forms of capitalism can ever solve the social problems faced by workers. Both forms of capitalism exploit the working class. Neither are options for workers to consider supporting.

Cost, Competition and Profit

Why is the nationalisation/privatisation debate taking place? The issue of nationalisation began with the 1945 Labour government and Keynes.

According to Keynes, anarchic tendencies in Capitalism could be prevented if the state expanded public expenditure in non-productive areas of the economy such as transport, communication, education and health. This policy, so Keynes believed, would not lead to the over-production of commodities, which could not find a market, but it would increase demand by keeping unemployment down with workers having money to buy subsistence goods they would not otherwise be able to buy if they were on the dole.

Such expenditure, Keynes thought, would also be beneficial in other ways; improved transport and communication would help trade and a literate and healthy workforce would be more productive.

The Labour Party, supporting and advocating Keynes's ideas, extended it into justifying nationalisation or state support for unprofitable industries like coal, gas and electricity, on which the rest of capitalist industry depended.

At the same time it was believed that Keynesian policies would take the edge off the class struggle and divert workers attention away from social revolution to the supposed benefits of social reform.

The Trade Unions also mistakenly supported Keynesian ideas as well as nationalisation policies. Workers, too, really believed they "*owned*" the state industries in which they worked. Trade unions and workers also thought that trade depressions were a thing of the past.

This state of affairs was not to last and by the end of the 1970's it had come apart at the seams with strikes, high inflation, a severe trade depression and rising unemployment.

The economic pessimism which followed the bankruptcy of Keynesian ideas led to a return to the past. *Free market* economists set up the Adam Smith Institute and Sir Keith Joseph founded the Centre for Policy Studies. They were joined by the Institute of Economic Affairs, who had embraced the writings of F A Hayek and Milton Friedman, both bitter opponents of nationalisation and Keynesian economics. These policy institutes found a home in the incoming Tory government under Margaret Thatcher.

The Need to be Profitable

Nationalised industries in Britain had always been a mixture of those more or less consistently producing profits and those producing losses.

Before 1945 the postal services (except for parcels for which the post office did not have a monopoly) were an important and dependable source of *tax-revenue* for the Chancellor as they were intended to be.

But the telegraphs, in their 115 years of operation from 1870 to 1985, never once made a profit, and the combined Telegraphs and Telephones from 1912 to 1938, made losses in most years. Since 1945, the post office has declined in importance and the telephone service, prior to privatisation, had generally made profits, though with some periods of heavy losses.

For the post office as a whole, postal profits greatly exceeded those of Telegraphs and Telephones.

With the greatly expanded nationalisation after 1945, it was a mixture as before, but with this difference, that the nationalised industries as a whole did not make profits but losses.

It had been disguised in their annual reports of "*trading surpluses*" by the injection of some £27,000 million of subsidies treated in their report as revenue, like the revenue from the sales, and by the wiping out of some of their huge losses.

The finances of the whole of the public corporations were for the years 1961 to 1973 analysed by the economist, Walter Ellis.

He wrote:

... the financial surpluses of the public corporations have at no point been sufficient to cover the interest costs on their accumulating debt in addition to wages and salaries. They have had to borrow growing sums to pay the interest that they could not cover from their sales revenues.

(Lloyds Bank Review, 1979)

Their total losses were even greater than Ellis suggested.

Professor D R Myddleton (**Financial Times** 18 February 1975) estimated the overall losses of the whole nationalised industries from 1945 to 1974 as £25,000 million.

In other countries experience has been much like the experience of nationalisation in Britain with some industries making profits and some making losses. In 1985-6 the Japanese state railways lost over £8,000 million.

A World Bank report on 27 developing capitalist countries in 1987 found that in only two were nationalised industries profitable. In all the others they were financially a crippling burden.

In order to survive as an industrial power British capitalism has to produce cheap in order to make a profit and accumulate capital. Adam Smith, in his **The Wealth of Nations**, pointed out that the way to cheapness is competition.

For over a century, British capitalism has been losing out to its competitors. Britain's share in world exports of manufacture in 1900 was 33%. It had fallen to 7% by 1985. In 1990, at the downfall of Thatcher, it had fallen to 5.5%. In 1995, at the tail end of the John Major administration it had declined to 4.7%. In 1998, under New Labour, the figure was 4.7% as it was in 2000. Britain is now a net importer of manufactured goods (*The Economy* ref/ MM:24. **Monthly Review of Statistics** April 2000 IMF/DTI).

From Nationalisation to Privatisation

It was the realisation of the problem of losing the competitive edge over other capitalist countries which led to a revival of interest in Adam Smith in the Tory party and of the *free market* economic ideas in the writings of F A Hayek. They believed that the enemy of competition was monopoly, high taxation, government expenditure and the power of trade unions.

They advocated wide scale privatisation, anti-trade union legislation and the introduction of competition within central and local government, the NHS and other state agencies.

Nevertheless, these policies still did not prevent periodic trade depressions, increased state expenditure and the ability of trade unions to secure higher wages and better conditions of work in the class struggle with employers. Privatisation also did not lead to a greater competitive edge over Britain's competitors.

As for the Labour Government under Tony Blair, they have not only abandoned their belief in nationalisation but they have embraced many of the same policies advocated by the Tories which they had opposed when in opposition: *Best Value* for Local Government with its emphasis on competition, privatisation, private finance initiatives, private-public partnerships, and so on. If nationalisation has proved a financial black hole for the capitalist class, privatisation has also been a problem, highlighted by Rail Track and the train network where huge government subsidies are still paid to the train operators. Ironically, one of Thatcher's supporters for privatisation in the 1980's, Andreas Whittam Smith, argued recently the capitalist case for renationalising the railways. He wrote:

"Numerous companies are experiencing problems that arise directly from the crisis. Supplies are late to arrive, completed orders are slow to reach customers, key staff are delayed, and so on, tiny inefficiencies are coalescing into a major set-back for the whole economy (The Capitalist Case for renationalising the Railways, Independent, 4 December 2000).

Nationalisation is an option for capitalist politicians sorting out problems in the interests of the capitalist class. Nationalisation or state capitalism has nothing to do with Socialism.

In conclusion, Socialists cannot stress too strongly to workers that they must not get involved in the problems of British capitalism. The establishment of Socialism requires a working class who can think and act in their own interests and not be side tracked by capitalist politicians in confusing these interests with the concerns of the capitalist class.

Neither nationalisation, nor a mixed economy, nor a wholly private sector economy can be made to work in the interests of all society. Let the capitalists and their political agents worry about their own problems. Meanwhile, there is work enough to be done, helping to build a class-conscious democratic, Socialist movement; a party able to destroy the class system and replace capitalism with Socialism.

Profit - the Sole Function

"Markets are interested in profits, and profits only; service, quality and general affluence are different functions altogether."

The Ideology of the Market

"The correct intellectual posture ... is the simple faith of childhood. Indeed children of the most exaggerated guilelessness turn up everywhere in the corporate speech of the 1990s, hailing the glory of the internet, announcing new corporate mergers, staring awe-struck at new computers, clarifying the bounds of history, explaining the fantastic surge of the Dow, and raising their winsome voices to proclaim the unanswerable new management logic that showed - as all previous management logics had also shown - just why it was that labour must submit to capital."

These quotations are from excerpts in the *New Statesman*, 8 January 2001, from **"One Market under God"**, by Thomas Frank (2001).

THE LEGACY OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

It only lasted two months, but the Paris Commune (1871) has been repeatedly invoked and re-interpreted. Marx, writing at the time, noted many different interpretations. Having written about previous French revolutions of his time (**The Class Struggles in France: 1848 to 1850** and, in 1852, **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**), he was well qualified to chronicle and analyse the 1871 revolution.

Earlier he wrote:

Men make their own history ... not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited conditions with which they are directly confronted (Eighteenth Brumaire).

This point applies especially to the Paris Commune. The people of Paris seized power at a time when Bismarck's victorious troops surrounded the city and the French government was negotiating for peace. From the start, the Commune was at war. As time passed, the government forces grew, with Bismarck's help, by his releasing French prisoners until, at the end of May, they seized Paris and slaughtered most of the Communards. This gruesome, indiscriminate massacre, where even children were killed, where the wounded were buried alive in mass graves, was evidence of how far the party of 'Order' and 'property' - saw the Commune as a threat.

"Marx's Account"

In his contemporary account, Marx concluded:

It was essentially a working-class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of

labour ... The Commune was to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of class, and therefore of class rule (The Civil War in France).

The Commune was fully democratic, its members being revocable at any time. Although in a position to do so, it did not seize the Bank of France or expropriate the businesses of the capitalists.

If Marx thought the Commune's aim was the abolition of the class system, it may be that he over-estimated the influence of those Communards who supported the International.

However, as Engels noted later, the majority were Proudhonists and Blanquists. The former were opposed to the principle of association, which was central to the Commune's efforts at social transformation. Blanquists, like Lenin, held to a vanguardist theory of revolution:

"a proportionately small number of resolute, well-organised men would be able ... not only to seize the helm of the State, but also ... to keep power until they succeeded in drawing the mass of the people into the revolution ... This conception involved ... the strictest discipline and centralisation of all power ..." (Engels, Introduction, 1891 to **The Civil War in France**).

Proudhonists saw the Commune as a mini-Utopia, with all France to become a federation of Communes. Blanquists wanted a Jacobin dictatorship - a view which became increasingly dominant in beleaguered Paris. Neither view fitted Marx's wish for a democratic working class revolution.

Bakunin: "the 'Negation' of the State"

Before this Bakunin and Marx had been in dispute. Marx played a key role in defining the policy of the International: *"to conquer political power has ... become the great duty of the working class"* (Inaugural Address, 1864). In

order to achieve social emancipation, the abolition of classes, the working class needed to gain control over the State.

Bakunin saw the State as the cause of violence and injustice: "*the abolition of the church and of the State must be the first and indispensable condition of the real emancipation of society*" (**The Paris Commune and the idea of the State, 1871**).

While Marx saw in the Commune "*the political form of the social emancipation*" (first draft of the **Civil War in France**), Bakunin declared himself a supporter of the Commune both because it was "*drowned in blood*" and "*because it was a bold and outspoken negation of the State*".

The dispute between Anarchists (now called Libertarians) and Marxists centres on the question of the State. We argue that since the State exists to protect the interests of property, in order to end the class system we need to take control of the state. Only by the abolition of the class system can we create a society with no need for a state.

Anarchist programmes can only be, at best, impractical; as long as the class system exists, so will the coercive political institutions it needs.

Lenin: A "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"

As Lenin's views changed about Russia and his own plans for revolution, so did his claims about the lessons of the Commune. He was as opportunist and inconsistent in this as in other things.

In 1908, he praised the idea of "*armed conflict and civil war*". In 1911, he wrote that the Commune "*sprang up spontaneously*" and was a "*truly democratic, proletarian government*". Come 1917, and he discovered in the Commune the organisation of Soviets and the arming of the workers (Lenin: **On the Paris Commune, Moscow, 1970**).

In **The State and Revolution** (1917), he invoked the Commune to justify his own programme:

... to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy - this ... is the experience of the Commune

Why did Lenin think it necessary to construct a new bureaucracy? Why suppose this would assist in the abolition of all bureaucracy, gradual or otherwise? The fact is - and Lenin demonstrated this - that simply changing the bureaucracy has nothing to do with the abolition of the class system.

Libertarians: A 'Self-Managed' Society

After 1968, there were some who saw in the Commune a form of non-bureaucratic, '*self-managed*' society, an anarchist Utopia.

However, this does not fit the facts: "*the real executive powers ... were still vested in the military and the police*" (Frank Jellinek, **The Paris Commune of 1871**).

New Labour's Gloss: An "Urban Community"

Recently there was an attempt to claim the commune for New Labour. Apparently, it was not about class; only about "*neighbourhood*" and "*community*", New Labour buzz-words.

It is the Communards' attempts to decentralise and federate, to re-establish community in a changing city, and their ability to conduct pluralist politics without the aid of political parties that resonates down the years (New Statesman and Society, 12 April 1996).

So, what it all comes down to is merely *"the appropriate shape of a modern urban community"*! How very soothing, bland and reassuring this New Labour interpretation is. And how remote from the blood-spattered reality.

The NSS article by Kevin Davey, is also wrong in asserting that the use of the Commune *"as a means of legitimising the Soviet Union"* was never questioned until the 1960's. The Socialist Party of Great Britain challenged such Leninist claims repeatedly.

In 1920, in publishing an 1874 article by Engels about the Blanquist fugitives from the Paris Commune, the SPGB prefaced it with a note drawing attention to *"similarities with groups in Germany and Russia"*. The SPGB shared Engels' critique of Blanquism/Bolshevism and its practical consequences.

From Blanqui's assumption that any revolution may be made by the outbreak of a small revolutionary minority, follows of itself the necessity of a dictatorship. This is, of course, a dictatorship not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of the small minority that has made the revolution, and who are themselves previously organised under the dictatorship of one or several individuals.

(Socialist Standard, April 1920)

Lessons of the Commune

The Blanquist/Leninist theory of revolution by a minority coup is not supported by the history of the Commune. Vanguardism entails dictatorship. The Commune was egalitarian and democratic. Bakunin's claim that there was a *"socialist instinct"* at work is also wrong. If there had been, the Communards' respect for the rights of business would be inexplicable.

What remains of significance is that Marx developed his ideas about the necessity for political organisation. Later in 1871, the London Conference of

the International adopted a resolution on political action, drafted by Marx and Engels:

... Considering that against the collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes;

That this constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure ... the abolition of classes.

(Marx: **The First International and after**, Penguin, p270)

The key lesson from the Commune is the necessity for the revolutionary Socialist movement to act as a political party, in order to gain control over the machinery of government. Without this any revolution is bound to be crushed.

As Marx asserted, the working-class party must not ally itself with other parties; it must be "*opposed to*" such parties, representing as they do, the interests of the "*propertied classes*". The SPGB asserted these points as part of its founding Object and Declaration of Principles. We continue to assert the need for Socialists to re-organise as a political party in the interests of the working class, and, in opposition to all other parties, to work for Socialism.

U.S. DEPRESSION?

U.S. banks continue to pay a heavy price for the downturn in the U.S. economy. JP Morgan Chase, the investment bank, reported a 61% fall in quarterly profits, American Express announced 5000 job cuts. Earlier this year it had sacked 1,600 workers. This is the anarchy of capitalism.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT: A REPLY

We have received a letter from Mr Northall, a member of the Clapham-based "Socialist Party" setting out some objections to the article "*Dictatorship of the Proletariat*" which appeared in *Socialist Studies* No 38. Due to its length we are unable to publish his letter but our reply is as follows.

Your letter refers to the conclusion of the article where, in a paragraph on the "establishment of Socialism", three statements are made:

- 1. "We in the Socialist movement do not accept the idea of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as a transitional period" (p6).*
- 2. "No political transition will be required because political society ends with the abolition of social classes" (p6).*
- 3. "The political transition takes place before the eventual victory of the proletariat" (p6).*

You state: "the latter two are not only wrong in themselves but not even consistent with each other". We will deal with each statement in turn and then show the consistency between the last two propositions.

i) Marx meant by the phrase "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" nothing more than was meant by the statement in the Communist Manifesto, that the working class must achieve "the conquest of political power". Marx and Engels both changed their minds during their working lives as conditions changed about how the working class were to conquer political power but it had nothing to do with the Blanquist coup d'etat strategy pursued by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

*In the introduction he wrote for the first reprinting of *The Class Struggles**

in France, in March 1895 - only a few months before his death - Engels wrote:

"The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for with body and soul. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required ... (Engels, ed W O Henderson, Pelican, 1967, p294).

Lenin's vanguardist policy is still followed today by organisations like the SWP with their idea of a violent insurrection by non-Socialists and the imposition of "a workers' state" led by a group of professional revolutionaries.

The "transitional period", pursued by defenders of the regime in Russia, meant the suppression of working class activity by military force, use of the secret police and censorship. The Socialism advocated by the SPGB was prohibited, as was our criticism of the exploitative state capitalism, which took place there. It was a dictatorship over the proletariat. This state of affairs would have been anathema to both Marx and Engels.

*Therefore, the Socialist Party of Great Britain do not accept the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a "transitional period". Capitalism has moved a long way since 1875 when Marx penned some notes against the **Gotha Programme**, which were never meant for publication. The enormous increase in social productivity since the late 19th century have made superfluous any transitional period between capitalism and Socialism including rationing through the use of time vouchers. Socialism can be established as soon as the majority of workers want it.*

The SPGB's view from its formation has been that there can be no Socialism until the great majority of the working class fully understands and accepts the implications of what they are consciously setting out to achieve, that is: the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

It follows that, whilst initially Socialism will be faced with many problems which cannot be dealt with in a moment, such as adapting production and distribution to answer the needs of the new society, some planning for this would surely have taken place in advance. Consequently the process would be relatively fast.

ii) Every class society is a political society. Once a Socialist majority has sent Socialist delegates to parliament to gain control of the machinery of government, class society is abolished along with class interests and the political parties that represent them. This includes the Socialist party used by the working class to achieve the conquest of political power.

iii) The political transition which takes place before the eventual victory of the working class is the build-up of the revolutionary force necessary to achieve political power. The political transition is achieved once a majority of workers are convinced that capitalism cannot be run in their interests. The political transition is from the point where workers support capitalism and capitalist political parties to where they support Socialism and act through a principled Socialist party with Socialism as its only objective. In short, the political transition is the process culminating in Socialists winning the battle of ideas. The battle of ideas has to be won before a Socialist majority can gain control of the machinery of government in order to replace capitalism with Socialism.

iv) Comparing what we have said in points ii) and iii) we believe there is no inconsistency for which to answer. Both statements are consistent with the conclusion set out in the article "Dictatorship of the Proletariat".

There is no inconsistency in holding that the political transition must/will take place before the victory of the proletariat and also holding that after this, with the abolition of the class system "No political transition will be required because political society ends with the abolition of social classes" (Socialist Studies No 38, p6).

v) *Your letter discusses the question of the revolutionary use of the machinery of government.*

The Party's principle governing the establishment of Socialism has always been, in the terms of Clause 6 of the Declaration of Principles, "that the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that the machinery of government, including the armed forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation".

Implicit in this conception is the recognition that, to safeguard the change-over from capitalist production for profit to Socialist production to meet people's needs, control of the armed forces would be continued for as long as necessary in the light of conditions then existing. It has never been the Party's case that simultaneously with a Socialist majority gaining control the armed forces would at once be wholly dismantled or abolished. In Engels' words: "The State is not abolished. It Dies Out" (Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, p 77 in the Allen and Unwin edition).

This does not mean that the armed forces would have to be used. As was pointed out in the statement drawn up by the Executive Committee and published in the Socialist Standard in 1955: "The control of the armed forces during this period will be an effective deterrent ... without these forces having necessarily to be used".

In conclusion, the main preconditions for the establishment of Socialism are predictable. That is to say, the long, arduous process of making the

Socialist case known, will have been completed and the democratic conquest of the powers of government will have taken place.

The Editorial Committee of Socialist Studies

'Classless' America's Yawning Gap

"For the majority of American workers, wages in the 1990s either fell or barely kept pace with inflation. But for top corporate executives these really were the years in which to stand up and say 'I Am'. Between 1990 and 1999, chief executive income went from 85 times more than what average blue-collar employees got to around 475 times more. In Japan, meanwhile, that multiple stood at about 11 times, and in Britain - the country most enamoured of new economy principles after the U.S. itself - 24 times."

From an excerpt in the **New Statesman**, 8 January 2001, from "One Market under God" by Thomas Frank (2001).

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANARCHISM

The problems thrown up by present-day society are plain for all to see. What is not so obvious is the way to deal with them. This requires thinking about, and once workers start to seriously think about why society provides drudgery, poverty and insecurity, the Socialist alternative will become apparent. It is being content to let others do the thinking that results in failure to achieve anything.

The Anarchist, in competition with other reformers, claims to have a solution to social problems. He claims these originate from the authoritarian state. The state is the negation of liberty in the eyes of the anarchist. It has to be destroyed before liberty can be established (Bakunin). Socialists are accused of wanting to extend the power of the state which shows how little anarchists understand Socialism.

On the surface, the anarchists' concept of a libertarian society has led a number of people to believe that Socialism and anarchism have the same objective in mind, and differ only in method. This is erroneous. The Socialist is a materialist who has grasped the historical significance of changing economic conditions leading to changes in people's ideas, whilst the anarchist is an idealist - that is, someone who constructs the world in his mind without reference to material and historical circumstances. The Socialist holds that the agent of social change is the class struggle. The capitalist class destroyed the feudal conditions of property, and the working class will, in its turn, put an end to the capitalist conditions of property. This is the issue in the class struggle, and it has to be fought on the political field by political parties.

Social change is not possible without political power being gained by those who desire the change. This is the historical sequence civilised society has gone through in the past and must go through in future. The emergence of the capitalist class and the working class went hand in hand with social progress in

the production of wealth. They are not eternal categories, and represent the development of the institution of private property. The impulse to Socialism comes from the necessity for the working class as a whole to realise its interests.

Anarchists do not accept this view. They maintain that political action for control of the state by workers is a waste of time, because Parliament cannot possibly serve as an instrument of social transformation. Instead, they advocate industrial and everyday struggles, though experience has shown that social reform is a waste of time and leads nowhere. In pursuing this line the anarchist movement is identical with the reformers of "*the Left*" with their "*day-to-day struggles*", and form only another fragment of the multifarious reform movements.

Proudhon opposed trade unionism on the grounds that it interfered with the liberty of the subject. Bakunin, during the sessions of the First International, told workers that political action was a waste of time. He constantly attacked Marx who urged the workers to build up an effective well-knit organisation for the prosecution of the class struggle on the political field.

The anarchist view is that a change of ideas in themselves, whatever the historical epoch, is sufficient for the establishment of a libertarian society, the perfect society. Rejecting, as they do, the theory of social development, their philosophy is purely abstract. It has no roots in the material world, having separated man from his environment. Men and women are a product of their social environment, and their thoughts and aspirations are determined by it. The prevailing ideas under capitalism are the ideas of the ruling class, in favour of the wages system and private property. The workers are not revolutionary at present, and it would be impossible for them to be revolutionary without seeking the essential step of dispossessing the capitalists by the political machinery. There is no other way. Yet the anarchists persist that it can be done by direct action against the capitalists who control the armed forces. So far, the only direction action anarchists have taken has been for reforms.

The present activities of anarchists have their origin in the unsound theories advocated by their founders. Max Stirner was one such pioneer. To him the individual was the only reality. Some years earlier, Ludwig Feurebach, the German philosopher, had said the love of humanity must not extend beyond humanity. Man is the highest being for man. Stirner went a stage further. He claimed that the love of humanity was an abstract thing and only existed in the mind of man, and the only reality was the individual with his wants, tendencies, and will: *"For me there is nothing above myself"*. Religion, conscience, morality, the law and family, were so many fetters forced upon him in the name of the abstraction - humanity. *"Right is might and might is right. If you have not got the former you have not got the latter. Every state is a despotism, even the most democratic, whether it is the despotism of one or many. I recognise nothing above myself. I feel oppressed by every institution that imposes any duty upon me."* (**The Individual and his Property**. 1845)

This is idealism of the highest order. The whole philosophy is based on an abstraction - society is not just a collection of individuals, it is the aggregate of social relationships. Production and distribution must be organised; labour must be based on co-operation. To talk about individuals as above and separate from the social organisation of wealth production is pure fantasy.

Stirner formed what he called the League of Egotists (one ego could not exist on its own). In common with anarchists of the present day, he was opposed to Socialism. *"If the socialist says that society gives me what I need, the egoist says I take what I want"* (**The Individual and his Property**). The anarchists claim that common ownership and democratic control of the means of production will lead to the regimentation and oppression of the producers, shows their ignorance of human behaviour. Man is by nature a co-operative animal with a common interest in making society function to the greatest advantage of all.

Three years after Stirner, Proudhon repeated the same viewpoint. For him there was no such thing as social evolution. The state was a fiction. Everything in history was born of men's ideas. The perfect society was always possible at any stage in history if only men had discovered the ideas of anarchism. *"The social constitution is innate in humanity, yet it could only be discovered as the result of long experience, and for the want of it humanity had to invent the political constitution."* (Confessions of a Revolutionary, Proudhon, quoted by Plechanoff.) This is an entirely utopian concept of human nature. Man does not have any innate principles - his viewpoints are results of his social experience.

The political superstructure of any given society, or the way in which public affairs are administered, arises from the economic basis of that society and exists to serve that basis. A change in the basis produces a change in the superstructure. The administration of public affairs at present is carried on by the state, which is the instrument of the ruling class, and it is essential as long as private property exists. In a society based on common property, the state could not exist as its function would have disappeared. The state is not the cause of private property but the effect of it. Even if the "*smashing*" of the state as advocated by anarchists were possible, it would not remove the condition of private property. Not that Stirner, Proudhon and Kropotkin were opposed to property - on the contrary.

Michael Bakunin died over a hundred years ago. His collected works were published by Sam Dotgoff (Allen & Unwin 1972), and he is described as the active founder of world anarchism. The same unrealistic theme runs through his entire works. He advances the theory of collectivism, a vast network of free associations with social autonomy which may or may not federate with each other at every level, with the right to secede from any federation. The basis of this association was collective property: *"I am in favour of collective property because I am convinced that so long as property, individually, or hereditary, exists ... the realisation of equality, economical and social will be*

impossible" (**Anarchism and Socialism**, G Plechanoff, p82, Kerr edn). Bakunin apparently was not opposed to individual property if it was not hereditary!

We are left in the dark as to how collective property can be socially administered; there is obviously no system proposed, and he was not dealing with social property. How can there be administration when any group can secede at any time? Collective property based on independent autonomous units may have had some place in a small peasant community or petty industry in an earlier stage of civilisation with low standards of production but to apply the concept to a modern socially integrated economy is utopian. In any case anarchists are not in favour of democratic control, and Bakunin's views on communism bear this out. "*I detest communism because it is the negation of liberty, and I cannot conceive anything human without liberty*" (p81. **Anarchism and Socialism**). This theme of absolute liberty and the "freedom" of the individual which runs through anarchist literature is pure abstraction. The anarchists lose sight of the fact that we have to produce the necessities of society and require a social organisation for this purpose, and the only way this organisation can run effectively is by the democratic control of the majority, not by small autonomous independent units.

Prince Kropotkin followed Bakunin, and is probably the most widely read of all anarchists. He contributed the article on anarchism for the 11th edition of the **Encyclopaedia Britannica**, 1910. The definition of anarchism which he supplied is given as "*a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government*". The ageless nature of this description is later shown by the reference to anarchism in history. According to Kropotkin, everybody from Socrates to Rabelais and others who objected to state interference was an anarchist. He tells us that the best exponent of anarchy in ancient Greece was Zeno, the founder of the Stoic philosophy who lived around 300 BC. He regrets that the writings of Zeno have not reached us. "*However, the fact that his very wording is similar to the wording now*

in use, shows how deeply he has laid the tendency of human nature of which he was the mouthpiece" (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

This defies balanced comment, but it does demonstrate an unsound, almost spiritual approach. We can leave it for modern anarchists to explain the relevance of Zeno to the social problems of today. Kropotkin supported Proudhon's mutualist rubbish published in **The Philosophy of Poverty**, which Marx dealt with in **The Poverty of Philosophy**: for example, rendering capital incapable of earning interest by means of a National Bank. All anarchists have to do is stop the industrial capitalist from earning a profit on his capital and the landlord and the banker to stop charging rent and interest, and this without expropriation. They do not propose to take political action to dispossess the capitalists. Industrial capitalists will not function without profit, and the workers support the wages system. The proposition is idealism gone mad. Little wonder that the capitalists have never taken the theories of anarchism seriously. How could this ethereal rubbish threaten their existence?

The shallowness of Kropotkin was exposed in the Great War of 1914-18 when he supported the Allied cause. He also supported the Russian Revolution in 1917. When the testing time came, the woolly-headed Kropotkin, in company with other figures of the international Left, was completely impotent. Not understanding the economics of capitalism they were unable to offer any clear advice to the working class who in their millions were going forward to their slaughter. The liberty of the individual met its nemesis in mass conscription.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the political weapon is the only one which a conscious working class can use to establish Socialism. It is not possible for society to develop in any other way. If Socialism cannot be established capitalism will continue; there is not a third choice called collective anarchism, communist anarchism, syndicalism, workers' control or workers' states. The means of production and distribution are held by the capitalists of the world. It is of the utmost urgency that society as a whole must make them

common property of society. The control of the state machine ensures ownership by the capitalist class, so that the first and only task before a revolutionary working class is to gain control of that machine for Socialism. The worker can do this by voting, but it is not just the cross on the ballot paper which makes the revolution. It is the person behind the vote. The theories of anarchism rest on the idea that a small intellectual elite can sway society: they have a contempt for the ability of the worker to understand the economics and politics of capitalism and consequently gain Socialist knowledge. They preach the gospel of despair, disguised though it may be in the romantic jargon of two centuries ago.

The old Utopians like St Simon gave some stimulus and incentive to the development of the theories of scientific Socialism, then in its infancy. The present-day anarchist is reactionary because he advocates the abandonment of the only effective weapon which social evolution has made possible - the political weapon - and politics mean Parliament.

Anti-Capitalism or Socialism

The capitalist Left have jumped onto the anti-capitalist bandwagon. Writers, like John Pilger (**The New Rulers of the World**, ITV 19 July 2001) attack the world bank and multi-nationals but don't spell out an alternative. The reason is simple. They don't have one. Socialists do. It is common ownership, democratic control and production for use not profit.

AUTHORITARIANISM, ANARCHISM OR SOCIALISM?

1 Introduction

P Lawrence, a member of The Clapham-based Socialist Party, has recently written a pamphlet "**Socialism and Law**" (November 2000). The pamphlet has been published privately in a response to what he considers to be "*the anarchist utopian position*", (p1) of an article "*Imagine a World Without Law*" that appeared in his party's official publication **The Socialist Standard** (November 2000).

In his pamphlet Lawrence claims that legislation and "*constitutional law*" (p2) are useful arrangements applicable to all social systems, class-divided or otherwise. Dogmatically he asserts: "*These will be continued in socialism*" (p2). And in his vision of a future society he sees the rule of law being exercised against men who beat women, child rapists and drink-drive motorists all of whom, presumably, will need to be pursued, constrained and punished for their negative anti-social behaviour.

Although in a Socialist society there will be no State, in Lawrence's own future society (p2), he still believes that laws and their enforcement can and should still take place in a social domain he refers to as "*civil society*". And he recalls Marx approvingly:

"Marx ... made a useful distinction between *Civil Society and the State*" (p2).

Lawrence then quotes Marx from **The German Ideology**, written jointly with Engels between November 1845 and the summer of 1846. This is what Marx wrote:

"*Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces*", (quoted by

Lawrence (p2). However, the quotation has been taken out of context and used with no respect for the mature views of the state, class relations and socialism that Marx was to develop later in his life.

To begin with, the authors of **The German Ideology** were still coming to terms with Hegel and his followers. The book was an attempt at "self-clarification" just as the preface to **A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy** (1859) was a "guiding thread" to their studies and not intended as a dogmatic conclusion.

Lawrence completely fails to understand the origin of the expression *civil society*, and why Marx first used then dropped the term. He also appears to be unaware of its current use by academics and politicians in their futile attempt to reform the social alienation within capitalist society.

2 The Origins of Civil Society

Before the work of the philosopher Hegel, the term "*civil society*" was roughly equivalent in meaning to the term "*state*" (see Allen Wood's introduction to **Hegel's Elements of the Philosophy of Right** p.xviii). Civil society expressed the idea of the growing freedom of the capitalist class from the feudal state.

Hegel's portrayal of civil society was based upon Adam Smith's depiction of civil society as, above all else, an institution of exchange. Smith defended capitalism by offering the proposition that individuals should be free to "*truck, barter and trade*" without any interference from the state. Following his reading of Adam Smith's **Wealth of Nations**, Hegel applied the term "*civil society*" to the sphere of commodity production and exchange for profit.

In his early writings, like **The German Ideology**, Marx uncritically took over Hegel's concept of "*civil society*". Yet, by the time Marx and Engels published **The Communist Manifesto** (1848), there had been a profound theoretical shift in their understanding of "*civil society*" and its relationship to the state. In fact, the expression does not appear in the text of the **Manifesto**, which can be seen, in part, as a critical comment on Hegel's **Philosophy of Right** and the supposed freedom he believed was enjoyed by all individuals in "*civil society*".

Already, a year earlier, we have Marx writing in **The Poverty of Philosophy**:

"The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonisms, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society" (p161).

Marx and Engels came to adopt the view that *civil society*, class and the state were intimately connected. And indeed this is the case. For individuals to take part in trade the state is required to protect the institution of private property, and the class ownership and control of the means of production and exchange. The state is a class institution, making possible the private economic share in which the capitalist class trades and forces the working class onto the labour market to sell their commodity, labour power, for a wage or a salary. Without the existence of the capitalist state, workers would not be exploited by employers in the productive process nor have what they produced taken away from them and sold for a profit.

That is why Marx and Engels wrote in the **Manifesto** "*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*". "*The common affairs*" of the capitalists being the exploitation of the working class and the pursuit of capitalists interests against their rivals abroad.

Following the collapse of state capitalism in Russia and the failure of free market economics in the US and Britain, the politics of "civil society" has experienced an enormous theoretical rebirth in which it is distinguished from "the public activities of government because it is voluntary, and from the private activities of markets because it seeks common ground and public goods" (Civil Society, C Sirianni and L Friedland www.cpn.org 2001). Advocates of "civil society" see it as the cement, which will bind capitalism together through the development of the "responsible citizen" who acknowledges both their rights and duties in the social domain.

Proponents of civil society are by and large conservatives and liberals. A leading advocate of "civil society", the American academic Robert Putman (Bowling Alone 2000) was recently guest speaker at a New Labour Downing Street seminar proposing his ideas of "social capital" and a "public space" of "volunteers and shared communality". All these concepts were proposed as social reforms, political sticking plaster to repair what politicians see as a fractured society within the contours of global capitalism. It is hardly a useful concept in discussing a future socialist society.

3 Marx on Crime in Socialism

During the 1980's some members of the SPGB wasted a great deal of time discussing "socialist prisons", and anticipating anti-social behaviour in a socialist society as though these speculative fancies had any relevance or bearing on the socialist case. The most pressing task at the moment is not the construction of anarchist or authoritarian utopias but in making socialists. The primary object of socialist propaganda is persuading workers to reject capitalism and accept the need for common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution.

However, in passing, it is useful to read what Marx said about anti-social behaviour in a socialist society.

David McLellan, in his book "Thoughts of Karl Marx", quotes from Marx the view that:

"The punishment for crime would be the judgement of the criminal upon himself" (Macmillan, p212).

We can for this purpose define crime as an anti-social act. And it would be naive to suppose that anti-social acts, trivial or serious, will not occur. At least in the early days of Socialism there may be individuals who show their opposition by disregarding the democratic arrangements agreed upon by society. This is why the machinery of government will not be immediately abolished, as the anarchists at Clapham have it, but will be converted from "*an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation ...*" (Clause 6 of the SPGB's **Declaration of Principles**).

Naive and stupid comments have been expressed along the lines that "*free access*" will enable someone to obtain all the materials necessary to construct a nuclear device. Such vacuous remarks forget that the means of production will be under the democratic control of society and that direct access to explosives will be restricted to those who know how to handle them responsibly just as the flying of a Jumbo Jet would be restricted to those who could fly the plane.

Likewise, the question has been raised as to whether, in a Socialist society, people would be able to disregard necessary social arrangements by performing operations, or other skilled work, when they have not shown their competence by either training or examination. Such activities would put people at risk. We offer no simple solution save to ask whether a person would be prepared to undergo a heart by-pass operation from someone not qualified in surgery.

We state the problem. We only raise the issue in passing because to pursue such problems now would be a waste of time. The object of socialist propaganda is to show that capitalism cannot be made to work in the interests

of the working class and that production for profit is the cause of their social problems. The job of Socialists is to explain and argue the Socialist case against capitalism, not to indulge in useless speculation.

As a concluding remark, Marx's view was that "*punishment, coercion is contrary to human conduct* (**The Holy Family**, p288). How future Socialists will choose to structure their social relationships will be for them to decide not us. We believe it will not be authoritarian and coercive.

4 The Socialist Position

From a Marxian perspective "*civil society*" is intimately connected with issues of class power, privilege and control. It should not be re-used in Socialist propaganda and is best left, where Marx and Engels left the term, *to the gnawing criticism of the mice*. Socialism has always been seen as being based on voluntary labour in production and distribution and voluntary activity in the affairs of Socialist society. You cannot coerce free men and women. Socialist affairs will not be the management and administration of people but, instead, "*the administration of things*" (SPGB, **Questions of the Day**, 1978, p97).

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has never attempted to impose upon a future Socialist society a detailed prescription of how they will conduct their affairs, and how they will democratically organise themselves. Lawrence is not proposing anything practical but is merely indulging in idle speculation to bide his disagreement with the SPGB's **Principles**. He was one of the prime movers, in the late 1980's, for giving support to reformist "*democratic movements*" and for expelling Camden and North West London branches for their principled stand in defending Clauses 5, 6 and 7 of the Object and Declaration of Principles. It will be noted that the Party's Object and Principles are missing from his pamphlet.

The diatribe found in his pamphlet is pompous and arrogant. The adjectives "positive" and "practical" which he appends to "socialism" is an insult to Socialists who do not agree with his authoritarianism. Opposition to Mr Lawrence obviously renders someone a negative and impractical Socialist.

There is also an undue pessimism in Lawrence's argument. He fails to grasp the relationship between the historically formed social framework in which people find themselves and the various forms of behaviour, both negative and positive, which take place within society.

He erroneously transports current human behaviour into a different social system forgetting that current human behaviour is a consequence of conditions existing under capitalism. Capitalism, lest he forgets, is the sum total of human relationships peculiar to this form of class society and its productive forces. "*Social relations*", writes Marx, "*are closely bound up with the productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations*") **The Poverty of Theory**, p102, Moscow edition).

Lawrence wants the impossible. He wants the rule of law, a constitution, and obedience to authority, law enforcement, legal institutions, agencies and punishment but without a state.

However, it is a Marxist contention that the state and law, just as the state and class society, cannot be separated. So, to all intents and purposes, Lawrence, in his utopian speculation, reinvents the State.

What is the SPGB's position on law and regulation in a future Socialist society? Nowhere has the SPGB argued that law and law enforcement will be an aspect of Socialist society. However, what we have said is that in Socialism there will be democratic control and through democratic control there will be regulation. What we have said on regulation is this:

In all societies there must be rules of conduct or the society would fall to pieces. Thus in a future society, when it has been established, there will also be rules of conduct in harmony with its social basis. As socialist society will be a free and harmonious association of people without special privileges it will not be necessary to have a state power to enforce these rules ... What these rules of conduct will be we don't know yet, cluttered up as we are with all the paraphernalia of today. But we can anticipate that harmony, kindness, generosity and a goodfellowship, such as the property world has not yet experienced, will be the principal ingredients (p48) *The Socialist Party of Great Britain and Historical Materialism: A Socialist Analysis of the Materialist Conception of History*, 1975, p 48).

There is precious little of "harmony, kindness, generosity and a goodfellowship" in the pages of Lawrence's pamphlet. Lawrence, in his critique of the anarchists who now control the Clapham Party and its journal, *The Socialist Standard*, writes a recipe book for the future this is both paternalistic and authoritarian. Paternalistic because it is prescriptive on how future Socialists will behave and authoritarian because of the degree of coercion he is forced to introduce within social relationships to impose his ordered and practical system. There is nothing in the writings of Marx, Engels nor the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which warrants such an anti-Socialist conclusion. Surely a harmonious system of production and distribution will have a marked influence on behaviour generally.

Mr Lawrence was going to produce a criticism of the reconstituted SPGB. That was over ten years ago. Nothing has been forthcoming. If the theoretical paucity of his pamphlet is anything to go by he is clearly not up to the job. Obviously we would like to debate with Mr Lawrence in public the issues he raises in his pamphlet. We await his response with interest.

THE GREAT ELECTION SHAM

Even for experts, it is becoming increasingly hard to distinguish between the main capitalist parties. The elections we are permitted every few years allow us only the sort of limited 'choice' we have when deciding which supermarket to shop at or at which petrol station to fill up. The sham choice between Tory and Labour is like taking sides in Lewis Carroll's bad case of sibling rivalry, where "Tweedledum and Tweedledee agreed to have a battle" (our emphasis).

Generations of voters have been betrayed by capitalist parties. About 100 years ago, a commentator wrote: *"every party in power leans in the direction of the policy of its opponents ... It is a common experience for each in turn to be condemned by its extreme followers for adopting the policy of its adversaries"* (Lord Courtney, *Working Constitution of the United Kingdom*).

Just before the 1997 election, polls found that about 23% felt there was no difference between Tory and Labour, and over 40% thought the election would make little or no difference to their lives. As the *New Statesman* asks: *"If the divisions between parties are not those of class or principles or ideals, but merely of managerial approach, how is the average voter supposed to choose ...?"* (5 June 2000).

Whatever promises are offered, once in power it is always the 'national interest' which determines government policy. So the 1997 change of government from Tory to Labour meant only slight and relatively insignificant changes in policy. The result - disappointment, disillusion, apathy.

In Swift's satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, the people of Lilliput were divided between "*big endians and small-endians*". Similarly, the modern working class are expected to take sides in supporting rival parties whose policies are almost identical for all practical purposes. Tory: the party of Business, Labour: the Party of business. Who can tell the difference?

Socialists look forward to the day when class conscious workers give their support and their votes to the only party whose policy is based on **class and principle**, a policy to serve the interest of the working class as a whole. To vote for Socialism is to reject the Tweedledum and Tweedledee parties of capitalism. Socialist votes are an indication of class consciousness and express a demand for an end to the class system. The only wasted votes are those cast for capitalism, votes of submissive indifference to slavery and exploitation.

THE PRODUCTIVE AND THE UNPRODUCTIVE WORKER

The descriptions "*productive*" and "*unproductive*" worker have nothing to do with the specific functions of labour power in the creation of use value; that is, the production of goods and services which satisfy human needs and in which the worker has deposited the energy of his brain, muscle and nerve. All wealth is a combination of nature, which supplies the necessary materials, and human energy. This simple relation of man and nature forms the basis of all human activity, and we will see this clearly in a Socialist world when our aim will be the production of wealth, not the production of capital.

The terms '*productive*' and '*unproductive*' have a very narrow definition which only holds good for capitalist society. The proper meaning of the word would convey that productive work was creative and that unproductive work was wasteful. This is not the case in capitalist society, and workers need not be affronted by being called "*unproductive*". The perpetually unproductive class in society (the capitalists) are held in the highest esteem.

From a capitalist standpoint the productive workers is one who produces capital, that is, in addition to reproducing the value of his labour power (his wages) he produces a surplus value. Out of this surplus value the capitalist derives his profit, and this, less overheads and expenses, provides further capital for repetitive transactions for the exploitation of the labourer. The expansion of capital is based on this principle, and the greater the accumulation, the greater the pressures on the capitalist to extend the avenues of investment; more markets, more machinery, and greater intensification of the exploitation of the worker. The productive worker is one employed by capital and who produces capital, in the form of the commodity. Capital on the surface exists in the monetary form, but this money represents a sum of commodities of equal value, which when brought into the productive process produces a greater sum through the agency of human labour alone, when an

additional value is created.

The unproductive worker, from the point of view of the capitalist, is one who consumes more than he reproduces. One who is paid out of revenue, wages and profits, and whose services are exchanged directly against revenue. Most domestic servants who provide personal services for their employer come into the category of unproductive worker, as do most civil servants, all High Court judges, the whole of the armed forces, priests, parsons and bishops, etc. A capitalist may employ a chef, or a gardener, for his own personal needs, and pay them out of his property income. The chef or gardener does not reproduce the value of his labour power, as he is merely concerned with the production of use-value, ie meals or herbaceous borders and lawns for the private consumption and amenity of a man who incidentally is a capitalist. He is not employing them in his capacity as a capitalist, and they are not producing capital, but use-value. If, on the other hand, the capitalist is a director of Hilton Hotels or Holiday Inns, he employs the chef and gardener in a wage-labour-and-capital relation, and in this respect they produce a surplus value over and above the wages they receive. The meals prepared by the chef are sold at a profit, and the floral arrangements, cultivation of grounds or vegetable garden, the work of the gardener, are likewise sold at a profit to the hotel guests. The use-value of the labour performed in both cases has not altered at all, but the economic relation under which the labour was performed has changed, and it is this economic relation which determines whether work is productive or unproductive, irrespective of the useful character of the work. The number of such workers who can occupy the position of being productive and unproductive under different conditions or employment is very restricted.

Useful or Not?

All politicians, the legal profession, government officials, judges, generals are unproductive - in fact the entire state machine is an unproductive institution. Not only are these people not productive, they are essentially destructive, yet

they manage to appropriate a substantial portion of material wealth. The state is a consumer of revenue which it compulsorily levies through taxation by the political parties who control it.

There is obviously a distinction between *useful* labour in the real sense and *productive* labour. A doctor maintains the health of labour-power, keeps it in a reasonable state of repair; but a doctor is not a productive worker any more than is a musician or an artist. The absurdity of this is apparent when, for example, a writer producing books of fiction, or a journalist, is a productive worker. One enriches the publisher, the other the newspaper proprietor. What they write may be absolute bilge, but that is not the criterion which is: do they add value to the original sum advanced in payment for their work?

The definition of "*useful*" labour in capitalist society is a different matter. Useful means that the product of labour must be socially necessary. That which is socially necessary is useful; that which is socially unnecessary is useless. Socially necessary means that useful labour has gone into the manufacture of a commodity or service; socially unnecessary means that "*useless*" labour has gone into the product. The test within capitalism which determines whether a thing is useful or useless is when you try to sell it. If it cannot be sold it is useless. An armoury full of firearms, shells and ammunition is considered useful, as is a nuclear submarine. The whole range of the killing instruments come into the "*useful*" category. Present day society has a need for killing instruments. On the other hand, a scheme to remove slums, irrigate the Sahara desert, or the extension of education into the proper study of history, sociology, anthropology and political economy, would be considered useless, although the capitalists would always pay lip-service to the idea. In effect, socially useful means that there is a profit, socially useless means loss. The merits or desirability of the way in which man's energy and natural resources ought to be deployed have no place in this economic and social arrangement.

What is Wealth?

Wealth comes into existence at the point of production and only through the application of human labour. The industrial capitalist may appear to be the direct appropriator of surplus value, but there is a whole background of interwoven ruling-class interests struggling for their share of the surplus product. The banker seeks his interest, and the landlord his rent - both are consumers not producers. The landlord does not produce, nor does the banker produce interest. Wealth is not made by Stock Exchange transactions, financial transactions, or any other form of dealing on the commercial markets. It is not made by buying and selling either, although it may be transferred between individuals. Money does not make money. Only labour-power can do that, in the sense that it creates the things which money can buy.

It is precisely the essential circulatory nature of capital, and the great division of surplus value into rent, interest and profit, that leads to the mystery behind the relations of production and the artificial distinction between productive and unproductive labour. With the development of labour-saving machinery and other advances in technology, there is a relative decrease in the number of workers engaged directly in the productive process. On the other hand, there is an increase in civil servants, local government officials, and other types of clerical workers. One of the problems facing the capitalist is how to control this expensive and unproductive bureaucracy which he has created and which he has to pay for. But without the unproductive worker, certainly at local government and national levels, no revenue through rates, taxes, etc could be collected, and no public services could be provided. The whole system would be in a state of chaos, and every capitalist representative knows this. These "*necessary evils*" are built in to the system and form part of the superstructure.

The extraction of surplus value is a social process, and all workers, whether their work is productive or unproductive, play a part in this process. To that extent all workers are exploited, because they are under the domination of

capital and have to sell their labour-power to whoever will buy it. Capitalist society cannot exist without its social bureaucracy, notwithstanding that this is becoming top-heavy. The problems faced by capitalists in trying to keep society on an even keel are nothing compared with the personal and social problems of the workers who have to live and work within it.

Capitalist production has stood the world on its head in every way. The most respected members of the community are a class of rich indolent parasites - the most revered institutions of law and learning are anti-social in that they exist to maintain the class of parasites to the detriment of the majority.

Neither State nor Private Capitalism

Number of Russians living below the breadline in millions (population 150 million):

1998	45m
1999	45m
2000	59.9 m
2001	54.4 m (first quarter)

Russian Ministry of Economic Development (Times, 24 July 2001)

TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS RALLY. July 2001.

This was our 8th appearance at the Rally and fine weather - essential for literature selling - held good on the 15th July. With 5 members and 3 sympathisers present, we were able to have 2 tables at different points in the village. Both had a full display of our pamphlets and one had a selection of books on political and associated topics. In addition our 2 leaflets - Introducing the S.P.G.B. and A Message For Trade Unionists - along with copies of Socialist Studies were distributed. Banners and other suitable material brought our name to a very large crowd.

Total sales and a few donations came to a record sum of £152.51, which included nearly 200 copies of our pamphlets - Women and Socialism - Capitalism's Future - Trade Unions, Co-operation or Confrontation. When we compare this with sales of just £8.30 at our 1st Rally in 1974, surely we have reason for some satisfaction.

At the head of procession was Bill Morris, Gen. Sec. of the Transport and General Workers Union, firmly holding a copy of Socialist Studies No. 39 with its distinctive red cover. Generally we had a very good reception and were able to engage in some useful discussions, particularly with Labour Party supporters who were questioning the ideas of the Blair government.

It was a most enjoyable day.

- TWO NEW PAMPHLETS - TRADE UNIONS. Partnership or Confrontation ?

Price 80p inc. postage. (stamps will do).

NEW LABOUR - A Party of Capitalism.

Price £1 inc. postage. (stamps will do).

WOMEN AND SOCIALISM

We have just had the 6th reprint. This is our best seller. A new chapter has been added, entitled 'Whatever happened to Feminism ?'

Still only 80p inc. postage.

LITERATURE AVAILABLE

ALL PRICES ARE
INCLUSIVE OF
POSTAGE

Socialist Studies - our official journal
Issues Nos: 1 - 41 @ 50p each

Socialist Principles Explained
The Object and Declaration of Principles
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

Banking & Credit Myths
A Socialist View 60p

Socialist's Handbook £1

Four "Questions of the Day" pamphlets: - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

The Materialist Conception of History Price £1

Our pamphlet looks at the theory of the MCH

and relates it to 20th Century Capitalism.

War and Capitalism Price £1

Updated reprint including reference to recent conflicts.

Women and Socialism Price 80p

Marxism in the 21st Century Price £1

A new pamphlet covering essential aspects of Marxian economics.

The Communist Manifesto in the 21st Century Price 80p

Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 1. Price £1

Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 2. Price £1

Why Capitalism will not collapse Price 80p

Trade Unions - Partnership or Confrontation ? Price 80p

New Labour - A Party of Capitalism Price £1

LITERATURE - SPECIAL OFFER

For an in-depth study of the case of
The Socialist Party of Great Britain
we have 3 special offers.

A full set of our Socialist Studies journals (nos. 1-41) for £7.50.

A set of our pamphlets listed above (17 in all) for £10.50

Or all the above listed journals and pamphlets for only £15.00.

ORDERS TO OUR HEAD OFFICE.

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

(Please make cheques payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES).

- Postage stamps acceptable for individual items -

LECTURE SERIES 2001 - 02

We are pleased to commence our new lecture series with a selection of subject matters that deal with some of the fundamentals of our case and more popular themes. We shall of course resume the series in January 2002 and full details will appear in issue No. 42.

Sunday 14th October

CRISIS, RECESSION AND POLITICS

Speaker: R. Lloyd

Sunday 11th November

RUSSIA - 10 YEARS ON

Speaker: C. Skelton

Sunday 25th November

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

Speaker: T. D'Arcy

Sunday 9th December

THE INSECURITY OF CAPITALISM

Speaker: C. May

Meetings commence at 3 p.m.
Marchmont Community Centre
62 Marchmont Street, London WC1
(5 mins. Russell Square Tube station)
(Question and Discussion period)

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH

meets at 7.30 pm on the second Thursday in the month
at Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, London NW6.

Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins Kings Cross Tube Station).

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities
should contact the Secretary.

Socialism on the Web

The Socialist Party of Great Britain now has its own web site at
www.spgb.org.uk

The e-mail address for the party is:
Socialist Party of Great Britain enquiries@spgb.org.uk

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO:
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB